

Mr. Dick Daniel
Assistant Director - Habitat Restoration
CALFED Bay-Delta Program
1416 Ninth Street, Suite 1155
Sacramento, California 95814

April 24, 1996

Dear Mr. Daniel:

You and I have previously discussed the broad issues associated with the implementation of a diverse array of habitat restoration projects throughout the Central Valley. These projects are envisioned for ecological and direct species benefits. Presently, there are probably a dozen extant habitat restoration and species recovery plans for the Sacramento River basin, San Joaquin River basin, Sacramento-San Joaquin delta and estuary, San Francisco Bay, and associated species, many of which are in various stages of implementation.

As recently as two years ago, agencies could implement individual habitat restoration projects one-at-a-time as funding became available. It was an effective approach then. Presently, in into the foreseeable future, the old approach cannot provide an efficient means to restore habitat. Contemporary restorations efforts are no longer hindered by inadequate funding, but have become encumbered by new problems. Some of the problems I have encountered include unrealistic expectations by the funding entities; lack of preliminary engineering, feasibility, and cost estimation; direct competition between the funding entities for projects, unfocused direction for some of the fund sources, inadequate agency staffing; uncertainty regarding environmental documentation (programmatic vs. site specific NEPA or CEQA documents); conflicting priority ranking systems; requirements for State/Federal cost sharing; and lack of an overall comprehensive vision.

In view of the number of fund sources and funding entities, I strongly believe that an overall vision statement needs to be communally developed that encompasses the purposes and expectations of all participants. From this communal vision, we can then develop an overall strategic approach to habitat restoration. I envision that a variety of strategies could be developed that would be complementary and address geographic areas, endangered species, depleted species, types of habitats, and specific watersheds. During the process of developing the mission and the strategies, a natural forum will be established which will provide for the overall exchange of information and coordination. This forum is sorely missing at this time.

In addition, the central focus of coordination cannot lie within and single agency such as the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service or the Department of Fish and Game, but must be elevated to a higher level. Therefore, it would appear that the existing CALFED Bay-Delta Program structure

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could logically be modified to provide the overall coordination for this massive habitat restoration effort.

In my effort to identify the components for an overall comprehensive habitat restoration framework, I have identified the following necessary elements and functions:

1. Facilitation of a regularly scheduled habitat restoration coordination meeting.
2. Development of a habitat restoration mission.
3. Development of appropriate habitat restoration strategies.
4. Consensus building for habitat restoration.
5. Coordination of habitat restoration project selection and scheduling.
6. Marriage counseling to bring the appropriate fund sources together for individual projects.
7. Enhance the ability of individual funding entities to implement habitat restoration projects.
8. Serve as a habitat restoration project clearinghouse.
9. Prepare a monthly newsletter of habitat restoration progress.
10. Develop and maintain a Central Valley Habitat Restoration web page.

This list could be expanded as there are likely many additional functions of this overall habitat restoration coordination program.

The initial meeting of agencies and stakeholders regarding the development of an overall coordination efforts should include at a minimum the management level staff from the agencies and stakeholders and specific staff level individuals listed on the attached page.

Terry J. Mills
Central Valley Salmon and Steelhead
Restoration Coordinator